



Sharing Information & Giving Support to Hawai'i's Family Caregivers

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Here Today and Gone Tomorrow

by Jeanette Nekota, MSW, ACSW, LSW

As quickly as I became a primary caregiver for my mother, it ended. My mother had died.

There is support for caregivers and for those who lose loved ones, often unexpectedly. But what is there for ex-caregivers? You simultaneously experience the loss of the loved one and an empty nest. Somehow, nothing seems to quite fit.

I AM A SOCIAL WORKER WITH MY GRADUATE DEGREE IN GERIATRICS. BUT I WAS SO BUSY CARING FOR MOTHER, I FORGOT ABOUT CARING FOR MY FAMILY OR MYSELF.

My readjustment has taken two years. In many ways, it is the seemingly small things that stand out as the most notable transitions. No longer was the front passenger seat reserved exclusively for my mother. It was now mine for family journeys. I could work late or attend community meetings without panicking about care arrangements that had been negotiated with my family. I could sleep through the night. I did not need to care for her or make sure she was still breathing. I

could vacation with my daughter, rather than alternating with her in order to ensure continuous care for grandma. I could sleep in late without worrying about the privately hired caregiver arriving and catching me in



my pajamas. Above all, I had to learn to adjust to the emptiness of life when I was no longer "a primary caregiver."

I look back on the many things I missed, such as greater involvement with my daughters during their high school years, or when my daughter ran for Cherry Blossom Queen. I reflect upon the things I endured, such as an overgrown yard, a neglected house and a house cat population explosion. I ponder how I, a licensed social worker, became entrapped in my caregiver role, neglecting both my family and myself.

I am a social worker with my graduate degree in geriatrics. My professional training has taught me all the signs of burnout. But I was so busy caring for mother, I forgot about caring for my family or myself.

My whole life was centered on my mother. Did I see the signs of burnout? NO! I was too busy doing.

I became a functionally depressed person. I was able to work, take care of my mother, do volunteer community work and take care of my home life. But I kept busy outside of the house to avoid going home. Wherever I was, I was just going through the motions. I went from anxiety to stress, and later, depression. I just didn't recognize the signs in myself.

After my mother died, my daughter suggested I go to her doctor. I did. She took one look and started my treatment for depression. I began to think clearly and spent time reflecting and evaluating life. I had learned a great deal as a caregiver—patience, humor and to live life to the fullest. Most importantly, I realized I cared for my mother not because I had to but because I loved her deeply. She cared for me, and in return, I wanted to care for her.

I have fond memories as a caregiver. The time I could not get her medication because the pharmacy's computer listed her as a prisoner. The time her constant teeth grinding irritated a seeing eye dog. There were our attempts to squeeze into too small elevators and doors; sitting upwind from her during each 4th of July fireworks display after she had a bowel movement and feeling sorry for the people sitting downwind; Singing Christmas carols in the middle of summer because they were the only songs she remembered; finding

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Upcoming & etc...

Family Caregiver Speakers' Bureau

What Is the Family Caregiver Speakers' Bureau?

The Family Caregiver Speakers' Bureau was developed to provide support to caregivers in the form of education and information to improve the quality of life for themselves and their care recipients. It is a resource to provide information about aging and caregiving to families and the general public.

Who are the Speakers?

The Speakers' Bureau is comprised of a diverse group of community experts from different backgrounds and agencies. Speakers are volunteers knowledgeable in topics related to aging and caregiving.

Who Can Use the Speakers' Bureau?

The Speakers' Bureau is a statewide resource. Both individuals and community groups such as businesses, rotary clubs, churches, support groups, and others can benefit from information provided by speakers.

How Do I Request a Speaker?

It is easy to request a speaker - just follow these steps:

1. Identify a topic for your group presentation.
2. Call the Executive Office on Aging (EOA) at 808-586-0100 to request a speaker. You may also contact us via e-mail at caregiver@doh.hawaii.gov.
3. Complete the "Request a Speaker Form" and submit it to EOA.
4. EOA will give you the contact information for potential speakers so you can call the speaker to schedule the presentation.

Topics

Speakers are available to present information in the following broad categories. If a topic of interest is not listed, please let us know so that we may be able to accommodate your request.

- Financial Issues (i.e. Social Security; Medicare; Medicaid; Long-term

Care Insurance)

- Legal Issues (i.e. Advance Health Care Directives; Power of Attorney; Guardianship)
- Community Resources (i.e. Support Groups; Geriatricians; Adult Day Care; Case Management; Respite Services)
- Housing Options (i.e. Nursing Homes; Long-term Care Ombudsman; Assisted Living Facilities; Residential Care Homes)
- End-of-Life Issues (i.e. Hospice; Bereavement)
- Other Aging Information (i.e. Alzheimer's Disease; Fall Prevention; Healthy Aging)

How Do I Become a Speaker?

We need quality speakers to be a part of the Family Caregiver Speakers' Bureau. Speakers are volunteers that give presentations to various groups. If you are knowledgeable in

Caregiver Services: Where Do I Start?

The best place to start in getting information on caregiver services in your community is your county office on aging. They can be reached at the following numbers:

Honolulu Elderly Affairs Division

523-4545

Kaua'i Agency on Elderly Affairs

241-4470

Maui County Office on Aging

270-7755

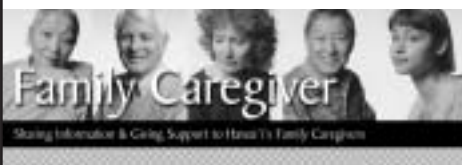
Hawai'i County Office on Aging

961-8600 (Hilo)

327-3597 (Kona)

topics relating to aging or caregiving and enjoy giving presentations, we encourage you to be a speaker.

It is simple to become a speaker. Just complete the "Volunteer Form" which is available from EOA. Make sure that all the information is complete and accurate and return it. We will then match you with groups interested in your area of expertise.



E LOA KE OLA



MAY LIFE
BE LONG

The Executive Office on Aging is the state agency whose mission is to promote dignity and independence of older adults, and to help prepare for the rapid expansion of Hawai'i's aging population.

Phone: 808-586-0100
www4.hawaii.gov/eoa

Linda Lingle
Governor

**Chiyome Leinaala
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Director of Health

Archie Hapai III
Chair, Policy Advisory
Board for Elder Affairs

Pat Sasaki
Executive Director
Executive Office on Aging

Wes Lum
Caregiver Resource Initiative
Project Coordinator



We provide access to our activities without regard to race, color, national origin (including language), age, sex, religion, or disability. Write or call EOA or the DOH Affirmative Action Officer at Box 2278, Honolulu, HI 96801 or at 808-586-4616 (voice/tty) within 180 days of a problem.

Creating an Alzheimer's-Friendly Environment

by Keoni Kealoha O. Devereaux, Jr., PhD
Vice President of Programs
Alzheimer's Association - Aloha Chapter

In the early stage of Alzheimer's disease (AD), people generally don't present safety problems. But because of the nature of the disease's progression, those in the later stages of Alzheimer's do present safety concerns. The following are some guidelines to help you, the caregiver, keep your loved one safe:



Keoni Kealoha O. Devereaux, Jr.

1. Alzheimer's patients are prone to falls. Floors should be kept clear of loose items. Remove scatter or area rugs. Roll up lamp cords and extension cords. Move furniture from walking areas. Place tape on sharp furniture edges.
2. Put decals on sliding glass doors so a patient doesn't accidentally attempt to walk through them.
3. Persons with AD often try to hide objects. Ovens, burners, and garbage disposals are favorite hiding spots. You may want to consider putting a lock on the oven door, and disconnecting the garbage disposal.
4. Never leave a person with AD alone in a car. They may get caught in the power windows, release the breaks, suffer from heat stroke due to the hot interior of the car, or accidentally start the car.
5. Store all medicines, solvents, and cleaning supplies in locked drawers and cabinets.
6. Consider removing the lock tumblers from a patient's room to avoid having them accidentally lock themselves in from the inside.
7. Keep clotheslines high enough that

your loved one with AD cannot walk into them. This may prevent a fall or even prevent them from choking.

8. Persons with Alzheimer's disease have a reduced ability to feel pain. Many of them are unable to speak, can't find words, and cannot tell you that they are in pain. Therefore, never feed someone with AD food or liquid without testing the temperature first. Also, always test the water temperature before giving a shower or bath.

9. The jets of water from the showerhead can be frightening to many persons with AD. Consider replacing the jet spray showerhead with one that gives off a fine spray.



10. Make the shower or bath tub a safer place by installing grab bars to prevent falls. Invest in a sturdy bath or shower seat, which will allow a person with AD to bathe while sitting down. Also consider a rubber, non-slip bath or shower mat with suction cups.

11. Placing outlet covers on electrical sockets will help prevent a person with AD from receiving electrical shock, should they stick a piece of metal into the socket or outlet.

12. Persons with AD cannot see well in the dark. Provide night-lights in walking areas and at the top of the stairs. Provide low-level table lighting for night use. Consider putting a safety gate at the top of stairs at night.

13. Many people with AD wander. Remember to keep the upstairs windows locked. Putting a small board in the sling track can lock sliding doors. You might want to consider using a red stop sign on the door. Research has shown that red is one color that people with AD do see

well. **Make sure to register your loved one with our Safe Return program.** Please feel free to contact our office at 808-591-2771 for more information about Safe Return.

14. Persons with Alzheimer's disease fatigue quickly. They seem to have the most energy in the morning and early afternoon hours. As darkness approaches, they become irritable and may display obstinate behaviors. Often they spend the night awake and wander about. This is referred to as "sundowners syndrome". A baby nursery monitor in the client's bedroom will allow you to hear your love one if he or she begins to stir during the night. There is also a weight-sensitive alarm that can be used. The moment your loved one shifts their weight off the sensor pad, an alarm sounds. This weight sensitive pad can be used in bed or chair, but is most effective in chairs.

15. Sundowner's syndrome can be eased for a person with Alzheimer's disease by making certain they receive regular exercise. Frequent walks outdoors in the bright light provides exercise and exposes the client to much needed sunlight. Research has shown that a person with AD sleep better and longer if they receive adequate daily sunlight exposure. Bright light increases the secretion of "melatonin" in the brain. Melatonin regulates the daily rhythms of sleep, body temperature, blood pressure, and heart rate. Melatonin is produced more as darkness approaches and reaches peak production sometime in the early morning hours. Research has also found that many people with Alzheimer's disease have low blood levels of melatonin, so it is even more vital to increase melatonin production by bright light exposure daily.

16. Consider removing mirrors from a patient's bedroom — many of them are unable to recognize themselves in the mirror. They may think a stranger is in their room. Try to fill the room with photos of people and events that stir up pleasant memories.



H O N O L U L U



Caregivers Conference held

Caring for Family, Caring for Yourself: A Caregivers Conference, held on August 27, 2005 at the Sheraton Waikiki, was considered a huge success by the over 800 caregivers and community members who attended the event. They learned about available resources and information to help ease their caregiving tasks. Attendees also took the opportunity to network and share best practices.



Dr. Kalani Brady (*above*), the keynote speaker for the event, talked about being an empowered caregiver. He gave examples of situations where caregivers can advocate for their family member and themselves, on how to overcome the many challenges to caregiving. Dr. Brady also gave exam-

ples of the challenges today's doctors face, including the increasingly complex and successful ways of treating the illnesses of aging, drug interactions and side effects. Dr. Brady stressed that by creating a written list of questions, keeping a log of medications and health conditions and being prepared, caregivers can successfully interact with health care professionals.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann addressed the caregivers at noon, thanking them for all they do and leading the cutting of a birthday cake celebrating Social Security's 70th birthday (*below*).



The conference connected the caregivers with 23 trained presenters experienced in the aging and caregiving field who understand caregiver's needs. The sessions were all designed to provide a variety of practical techniques and useful information, as well as coping with the stress of caregiving.

The 16 concurrent sessions included topics ranging from monitoring prescription drugs, legal issues, making the right choices, handling difficult behaviors, dealing with stress and avoiding burnout to the changes to Medicare and Medicaid. Conference goers also learned about financial planning and the latest about deductible costs and other tax deductions and credits associated with caregiving. All the sessions provided essential knowledge and hands-on skills geared to assist family caregivers.

The conference also connected attendees to an array of informational resources available in the community. Forty-five exhibitors featured information that included various care options, resources and services. Participants also had the choice of indulging in an assortment of self-

care activities, including lomi-lomi by Betty Kamakani, shiatsu massages by the Kapiolani Health Services Department, Healing Touch techniques by the members of the Healing Touch Posse and best practices of foot care by Dr. Chris Teramura of the Advanced Footcare Center.

Plans are already underway for next year's conference, which will be held June 10, 2006.

H A W A I ' I

Caregiver's Conference in Kona

Mark your calendars for the Carousel of Care: A Caregiver's Conference, to be held on Wednesday, November 30, 2005, from 7:30 am to 4:30 pmat the Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort. Please call 808-327-3597 for more information.

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) for Hawai'i County

In an effort to improve services to our County's caregivers, Mayor Harry Kim directed the Hawai'i County Office on Aging (HCOA) to pursue the establishment of a one-stop information and counseling resource center relating to long-term care issues. In many communities, long-term care support services are administered by multiple agencies, and the intake and eligibility functions are complex, fragmented and often times duplicative. The center should be a non-threatening environment where the public will feel comfortable and welcomed when seeking information, assistance and training. Every person will be linked to the information or programs they need while limiting the need for referral to numerous other agencies. A single, coordinated system will minimize confusion and frustration and enhance the individual's ability to make informed decisions and choices.

To initiate the concept of a one-stop resource center and to incorporate the vision and directive of the Mayor, HCOA garnered support from and collaborated with the State Executive Office on Aging (EOA). EOA applied for a grant initiative from the Administration on Aging and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to establish an ADRC (Aging and Disability Resource Center) in Hawai'i

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It worked for me

with Karen Koles



For the past eight months I have been a care recipient. Believe it or not, I have come to the conclusion that it is better to be a caregiver than a care recipient. Now that I am on the road to recovery, I'd like to share some thoughts with you from the point of view of a care recipient.

As a caregiver, I firmly believed that my loved one required daily baths and would feel so much better after one. I quickly came to realize as a care recipient that daily baths are exhausting and caused my skin to dry out. I found the different lotions that were supposed to keep my skin soft and pliable were actually sticky and uncomfortable. Basic cleanliness? Yes! Daily baths? Not always necessary, especially while one is bed-bound.

Blessed are the family, friends, and neighbors who believe that chicken soup cures all ills. The foods that I appreciated most were delivered in microwavable containers, in single-serving amounts and in disposable dishes. I appreciated the phone calls that informed me when the food would be delivered because that eliminated the possibility of too much food on some days and nothing on other days. Considerate cooks took the time to inquire what foods would be appealing to my taste buds as well as what foods I needed to avoid. Best of all were the friends who occasionally delivered enough food to feed the entire family, thus giving my caregiver a well-deserved respite from cooking.

Often I was too exhausted to go

grocery shopping or unable to drive due to the effects of medication. Friends would call to ask what I needed, then drop off a small sack of groceries. It was easier to put away a few items a couple of times a week rather than a large number of items at one time.

Bill paying became a chore because writing was so difficult for me. A wonderful and trusted friend wrote out my checks and filled out any necessary forms. Another friend took dictation and wrote out many thank you notes. All I had to do was laboriously sign my name.

As a care recipient, I appreciated friends who called before coming by to visit. These true friends would make the effort to visit and understood if the visit had to be limited to just 10 minutes when exhaustion would set in and I'd have to excuse myself. Special blessings on visitors who didn't wear any perfume or aftershave, as strong scents would bring on bouts of nausea. As my energy level improved, I enjoyed being taken on short car rides, and later, for walks which provided much needed fresh air, exercise and a chance to be out of the house.

Also appreciated were foot massages, back rubs, flowering plants which required minimal care, cards and letters of encouragement, offers of transportation to doctors' appointments and medical tests and short phone calls.

"Call if you need anything" was an oft-repeated phrase, but as a care recipient, I hesitated to call for fear of inconveniencing others. It was much easier when friends called with a definite offer ("I'm going to the supermarket tomorrow. What can I pick up for you?"), leaving me to accept or decline their generosity.

My recovery continues, but it would not have been possible without the help of excellent caregivers, my devoted family and thoughtful friends.



Family Caregiver Training Program

Hawai'i's senior population is rapidly growing, and many are finding themselves in the role of informal caregivers for parents, other family members or perhaps a good friend. Lacking training and knowledge, most caregivers learn by experience, which can take its toll emotionally, physically, socially and financially on the caregiver and family. The end result can be devastating.

The Franciscan Adult Day Center and Eldercare Hawai'i have organized the Family Caregiver Training Program. This program is for family caregivers who would like to receive training in eldercare to enhance basic caregiving skills and improve the quality of care for the elder while taking care of themselves.

Participants are encouraged to enroll for all six sessions, which cover a wide range of topics. The training begins September 10, 2005, and will be held every other Saturday morning from 8:30 am to noon at either Central Union Church or Kahala Nui. These workshops are free for family caregivers. Space is limited, and pre-registration is required. Topics include:

- Perspectives on Aging ... What's Normal?
- Providing Care in the Home: Nursing Skills, Safety & Mobility
- Identifying When It's An Emergency & Knowing What to Do
- Change Happens! Planning for Incapacity
- Caregiving and Communication: Keys to Caring for Someone with Alzheimer's Disease
- Caregiving at the End of Life; Caregiver's Circle

For more information or to register, please call Deborah at 988-6300 or email: Deborah@EldercareHawaii.com. This program is partly funded by a Title III-E Federal grant administered by the Executive Office on Aging, State of Hawai'i through the Elderly Affairs Division, City and County of Honolulu.

From Grumble to Rumble: The Silver Legislature

Are you concerned with senior issues? Do you want to develop your leadership and citizen participation skills? Then the Silver Legislature is right for you!

The Silver Legislature is a mock legislature designed to offer adults 50 years of age and older a lively, stimulating "learn by doing" experience. Participants take real, current issues through the law-making process by playing the role of a legislator, lobbyist or observer. Best of all, bills passed by the Silver Legislature will be considered by the real legislature in 2006.

The Silver Legislature takes place on November 17 and 18, 2005 at the State Capitol using House and Senate chambers, conference and hearing rooms. Registration for the event is just \$5. The fee is for two days and will include materials, two breakfasts and two lunches.

Community Forums, which are larger area-wide workshops where participants get actual training in learning the best ways to advocate for their issues, are being planned in



your neighborhood. Trainers include legislators from that district, experienced lobbyists and Public Access Room staff. Registration to attend the Community Forums is not required, and they are free and open to the public (even those who are not going to the November event). Attend a Community Forum near you:

- September 14, 9:30-11:00 am, Lanakila Multipurpose Senior Center, 1640 Lanakila Avenue, Honolulu.
- September 27, 10:00-11:30 am, Lihue Public Library, 4344 Hardy St., Lihue, Kaua'i.
- October 3, 9:30-11:15 am Moanalua Recreation Center, 2900 Moanalua Rd., Honolulu.
- October 7, 10:00-11:30 am, Kilohana Methodist Church, 5829 Mahimahi St., Honolulu.
- October 12, 10:00-11:30 am Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc., 99 Mahalani St., Wailuku, Maui.
- October 21, 9:30-11:30 am, UH-Hilo Campus Center, University of Hawaii- Hilo Campus Center, Room 301.
- October 24, 11:30 am-1:30 pm, Harris Methodist Church, 20 S. Vineyard, Honolulu.

For more information about the Silver Legislature or for updated information about the Community Forums, please visit www.kokuacouncil.org or www4.hawaii.gov/eoa or call Laura Manis at 597-8838 or Carolyn Golujuch at 672-9050.

County Corner

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County. The ADRC would provide support to older adults, individuals with disabilities, family caregivers and persons planning for future long-term support needs. It will also serve as a resource for health and long-term professionals and others who provide services to older adults and to people with disabilities.

Recently, EOA received approval for its grant application and Hawai'i County will be a major beneficiary of this three-year grant totaling \$800,000.

It's a daunting and monumental challenge for HCOA, but also a very exciting undertaking. HCOA, working with our Partners in Eldercare network, is committed to establishing a model ADRC for both the aging population and for persons with disabilities that is consumer friendly and promotes the "no wrong door" policy to accessing

the long-term care support system.

Hilo Caregiver's Conference

A successful Hilo Caregiver's Conference (*right*) took place on August 11, 2005 at the Hawai'i Naniloa Resort. Sponsors included AARP, HMSA, Alu Like, and the Hawai'i County Office of Aging. Approximately 300 people attended and there were over 20 booths at the Resource Fair.



MAUI

Caring for Family, Caring For Yourself: A Caregiver's Conference

Mark your calendars for Maui County's caregiver's conference titled "Malama Pono 'Ia," scheduled to be

held on Saturday, November 19, 2005, from 8:00 am to 4:15 pm at the Maui Beach Hotel. Please contact the Maui County Office on Aging at 808-270-7755 for more information.

Maui Caregivers Talk Story and Carry On Daily Life

by John A. H. Tomoso, MSW, ACSW, LSW, Maui County Executive on Aging

"Talking story" is something we all like to do. Just as in other parts of Hawai'i, where the "talk story" or "wala'au" has been elevated to cultural, almost iconic status, Maui folks relate to and learn from each other while "talking story."

For many Family Caregivers, getting together to talk is a social and even therapeutic respite from their caregiving. I attended Aunt Betty Yamashiro's "Lunch Bunch" recently, which focused on the "living with dementia" aspects of caregiving. I was

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happy that the group, after exchanging greetings and other pleasantries, started off by sharing funny jokes they had each collected. Laughter soon erupted and literally spilled over the



table to others around us. "Ah, laughter is good medicine," said one. The jokes and their punch lines became the foundation for a discussion about how one literally needs to laugh at the seriousness that surrounds the caregiver. I brought some of the jokes back to the office with me.

Eventually, we all had lunch. As is the custom and practice in Hawai'i, we all talked about the foods we each brought to the table, delighting in every aspect of individual dishes. Of course, we shared the food, too! "Oh, he likes eating, it's his favorite time," said one caregiver about her spouse. As we ate, we all realized that this daily and necessary action bonds and binds the caregiver with the one cared for. "Eh, we eating the same food!" said another caregiver. We all nodded in agreement.

The subject of getting lost came up as we talked story. "What do we do in case of an emergency?" We all shared our "emergency experiences" and how that important 911 call is so helpful, even crucial. Someone said, "We should let our other family members know of the emergency plan." At this point, we learned that Maui Police Department has a registration program for at-risk individuals. Someone else then said, somewhat authoritatively, "let's take advantage of this program, it's for our own good." We again all nodded in agreement.

I asked the group, "Why do you show up every time?" In various ways,

they responded that they found it helpful and that they enjoyed themselves. The enjoyment part was accompanied by some rather hearty laughter, even from some of the cared-for spouses present. Thus began a wonderful process that bonded us together, quite literally, as one! The laughter continued with little comments of advice like "remember to laugh when you can" and "I like laughing," and "Yeah, keeps me sane!"

As we started to say our good byes, we all reminded each other of the next date and time. Auntie Betty said, "No forget, same time, same place." Another caregiver then quipped, "Yes, routine is my friend and his friend too." To which I added, "...and so is laughter." I started laughing and so did the others. Looking around, I saw people smiling.

K A U A ' I



Attendees Enjoyed Kaua'i's Caregiver's Conference

On August 10, 2005, nearly 100 people attended Kaua'i's Caregiver's Conference at the beautiful Terrace Restaurant situated alongside the lagoons of the Kaua'i Lagoons Golf Resort. Attendees heard presentations from Lee White, AARP National Director, discussing personal caregiving experiences; Ken Ng, financial planner from O'ahu, discussing Estate and Life Financial Strategies; and HMSA's Pete Clines, presenting "Food for Thought: Dietary Guidelines For You."

Caregivers were enthusiastic about the benefits of the presentations. And, they enjoyed the local provider booths where they could browse for more information while enjoying a continental breakfast. Also, everyone had an equal chance to win a number of prizes donated by local providers and the event's co-sponsors. Perhaps the highlight of



Tutu's
Corner

Waianae Coast hosts grandfamily caregiver conference

Ka Lei Mehana O Na Kupuna, a conference for "grandfamily" caregivers, was held on the Waianae Coast on September 15, 2005. The following are photos from the event.



the day, though, was at the end of the conference when Kaua'i's Mayor Bryan Baptiste cut AARP's large and delicious cake celebrating Social Security's Birthday (above). Cake was served to all.

Caregivers went away having gained some useful knowledge, making many helpful contacts, and for many, having a brief respite from care.

Medicare Part D Update

October 1, 2005 has come upon us all too quickly. The Medicare Part D (Prescription Drug) plans that will be available in Hawai'i are now allowed to market their materials. Our *kupuna* and members with Medicare will be receiving a lot of marketing materials in the mail, seeing things in the paper and on the television and hearing information on the radio. Some may even have presentations at their social or senior clubs.

Please remind your family, friends and neighbors to take their time and do their homework before signing up for a plan. We want to make sure that everyone gets the plan that is best for them. The volunteers at Sage PLUS can help with comparing the plans and providing the information that is available. Remember, if something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

On October 13, 2005, you will be able to go to www.medicare.gov, to the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder and compare the programs avail-

able in Hawai'i. You will need the zip code of the person you are assisting, a list of their current medications and the pharmacies where they would like to purchase their prescriptions. The plan finder will help you navigate through the maze of the various programs available and come up with the

ones that best fits your needs and the cost to you or your family member. After November 15, 2005, you will also be able to enroll in plans on this site.

Sage PLUS Volunteers can be reached at 586-7299 or 1-888-875-9229. Your call will be returned within two working days. If you need immediate assistance, you can call 1-800 Medicare (1-800-633-4227), 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Here today, gone tomorrow

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out what she ate for lunch by wearing it after she threw up; almost losing the wheelchair (with my mother in it) down a hill. The list goes on.

I have gotten over my anger with thoughtless people. The support systems in the community (like church) did not understand that I could not immediately find respite care to attend a function or even church on Sunday. I have learned to accept the reality that not only did I have limits of giving, but so did my family. I

relied on my husband and daughters to supply respite care. But she was my mother, not my husband's, and my daughters had school activities. We juggled our schedules to have someone home in the evenings and weekends. Somehow, we managed to provide coverage for five years.

While caring for mother, it seemed my family was being torn apart. Now that she has died, we have found it made us stronger. The horror stories have turned into humorous ones. We can laugh and remember.

Would I do it again? At a drop of a hat, but fully aware that it is easier said than done.

E LOA KE OLA



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MAY LIFE BE LONG